



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### CHAPMAN RULES AGAINST SHELL DEVELOPMENT ON SABINE WILDLIFE REFUGE

Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman has ruled that the proposed commercial development by private interests of the oyster shell deposits found on the East Cove Unit of the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge on the Gulf Coast of Louisiana--the largest and most important waterfowl wintering refuge in southern United States--should not be permitted because "such development will not be in the public interest."

The Secretary's decision, dated November 17, 1950, is as follows:

"1. The proposed exploitation of the shell deposits on the Sabine Refuge would operate to seriously affect the Mississippi Flyway. The Sabine Refuge is an essential and highly strategic link in the refuge system. It affords an irreplaceable wintering ground for the annual concentration of large numbers of ducks and geese of many species at the southern terminus of these migrations. It follows, therefore, that any reduction in the capacity of this refuge to sustain these wintering waterfowl will correspondingly decrease the supply of birds throughout the entire Mississippi Flyway. Consequently, the States directly concerned, and the Nation as a whole, have a vital interest in the successful administration and management of this important refuge.

"2. The development plan under consideration is contrary to the principles of waterfowl management. It has been determined that progressive excavations south of the present shore of Lake Calcasieu, as proposed, will result in disrupting the drainage affecting underground waters to the depth of the excavations essential to the utilization of the shell deposits on the refuge. The ecological changes resulting from the operations as contemplated will prove highly detrimental to the effective use of the entire refuge for the conservation of wildlife.

"3. The excavations resulting from dredging operations would have no value to most species of waterfowl, would affect the entire east cove area, and would render a large portion of the refuge worthless for the purpose of waterfowl or other wildlife management.

"4. Louisiana shell deposits are not in a state of critical shortage for industrial uses and there is no justification for authorizing the exploitation of the Sabine shell resources by reason thereof.

"5. It appears that the development of the shell deposits near Lake Calcasieu may seriously affect the ground water levels of the area and the water supply of farms and communities to the south thereof, as well as the general hydrology of the marsh lands adjacent to the lake."

In commenting on Secretary Chapman's statement, Albert M. Day, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, said, "The Service is indeed happy over Secretary Chapman's wise decision. The Sabine Refuge, of 142,749 acres, at the terminus of the Mississippi Flyway, is the largest and most important wintering refuge that we operate in southern United States. This is the area where a large portion of the important sporting species of ducks such as the mallards, pintails, and gadwalls of the Mississippi Flyway finally wind up when they have eaten up all of the food from the upriver swamps and bottom lands, and when these upper reaches are ice-bound or too deeply flooded for feeding purposes.

"Thousands of waterfowl frequent the area daily in season, with peak concentration of  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million birds being common. The East Cove unit, of approximately 14,000 acres, is particularly popular with the big Canada geese, and was bought specifically for them. It has large expanses of pure-stand three-square which is so highly prized by the Canadas as a winter food. The loss of this area would have been irreplaceable."

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